

Business Culture Consultants

The Process

FLIP BROWN, Business Culture Consultants

"I believe that how things are done between people and in groups is as—or more important than—what is done. The how or the 'process,' usually communicates more clearly what we really mean than does the content of what we say. We are less skilled in thinking about processes, in observing them in action, and in designing processes that will accomplish what we intend. In fact, we often design or participate in processes that actually undermine what we want to accomplish."

Edgar Schein

I'm fascinated by what happens when good people bring their individual and collective energy to the workplace. When "who we are" is in alignment with "what we do," we feel a powerful, purposeful connection with others to achieve mission-driven results.

It starts with a conversation . . .

I begin with a series of matching conversations to determine your needs and whether this is a good fit for your organization and mine. Both sides of the potential relationship need to feel reasonably comfortable to "hang out" professionally and do the work. Sometimes having multiple contacts pays off in order to get the "going in" right for both parties. There is never a charge for these matching conversations — they are my investment.

Proposal Generation/Modification/Acceptance

Once the match looks like "Yes!" a written proposal is generated (sample available upon request). It contains your goals, the anticipated start and end dates, the organization's project sponsor(s), the goals, methods, logistics, risks, evaluation, the value of the work to the organization, pricing, and terms. Once it is accepted the scheduling of service delivery begins in earnest, including the co-drafting and distribution of an internal announcement memo, so that all relevant stakeholders have a clear understanding of the project from the beginning.

Assessment phase

Since each organization has its unique elements, and the so-called "presenting problem" might have multiple factors, a cultural assessment process is conducted. First, I generate observations through active listening and skillful interviewing that includes structured questions, spontaneous inquiries, and "business intuition" to obtain information and experiences from a wide variety of personality styles and communication abilities. Next, the results are synthesized and reported – privately first to the owners or leaders, and then in a generalized form to all

relevant employees. It is important to note that staff interviews are conducted with “blended confidentiality” — individual comments are not identified. The feedback is woven together in a paraphrased fashion so that team members feel that they can be open.

“The Work”

Typically, the assessment process will create a number of recommendations that form the basis for a clear agreement (as a separate defined proposal) to begin management, behavioral, and cultural change. This is the “heart” of the improvement process, and involves a combination of the direct application of my consulting, facilitation, and coaching skills. While it is important to create a work plan with reasonable levels of detail, it is my consistent experience over time that there is a certain amount of “unfolding” that happens once the project begins, much like the remodeling of a house can uncover additional structural needs. In most cases, specific managerial behaviors and group norms are observed, identified, and supported or challenged as appropriate.

By creating a deep “container of trust,” individual professional growth is accelerated through both supporting and challenging key members of the organization. Drawing on observed and reported examples, executives increase their awareness, develop new options, practice implementation, and measure impact. By consistently working towards improved patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, greater results are achieved. This work then ripples out to other individuals and teams.

A large-scale change project will generally require a regular on-site presence weekly to bi-weekly for the first six months, tapering to once to twice a month in the later stages, although each project develops its own needs and timetables. Key executives have unlimited phone and e-mail access (because they’re too busy to abuse the privilege!). Structured and on-going evaluations are held, and feedback in the spirit of mutual accountability is always encouraged. Every effort is made to accommodate the workplace variables that exist — travel to multiple locations, on-site meetings late at night or early in the morning (in a three-shift environment, for example). The goal is for Business Culture Consultants to be a “temporary business partner” and do what is required, with clear boundaries, to achieve the stated project goals.

Sustainable Results

One reason why millions of organizational dollars are wasted on training programs is the lack of focused follow-through. We've all come out of an excellent workshop saying to ourselves, "Yes, I'm going to incorporate this material into my professional life!" only to experience an astounding evaporation factor over the weeks and months that follow. Generally speaking, I ask my clients and their organizations to make a commitment of one year — not because it takes that long to create change, but to insure that individuals and teams do not fall back into old patterns.

Value-based Fees

- Fees are structured by the project not in a traditional (and usually uncomfortable) hourly basis. The fee is based on the value received, not the time spent, so there is no worry about incurring additional charges for picking up the phone or scheduling an extra meeting. We both do what it takes to meet the stated goals.
- Fees include all direct expenses: meetings, communication, phone calls, e-mail, faxes, preparation, presentation, reports, materials, travel (except as noted below), and supplies. No supplemental or ancillary billings unless there is mutual agreement that the project scope or mission needs to change from the original proposal.
- Primary travel expenses of air fare, hotel, and ground transportation for travel beyond reasonable driving distance can be billed at cost or included in the overall pricing. Treatment of travel expenses will be discussed up front and included in the written proposal.
- Payment schedule is clear and negotiated in advance — we each know how invoices will be generated, when payment is expected, and how payments are to be made.
- Negotiations over timing of payment can be opened in consideration of an organization's cash flow difficulties as long as advance discussions are held. There are times when it makes sense to go ahead and provide or continue services even though "out-of-the-box" payment terms need to be arranged, in light of specialized situations.

This process is an ongoing conversation, with integrity, clarity, and even some light-hearted fun. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to ask for a free consultation. It would be a pleasure and privilege to work together.



Business Culture Consultants helps businesses and organizations become more connected, more collaborative, and ultimately more successful. Engaged clients have strengthened their business relationships, deepened their awareness, and held true to their values.

To learn more or schedule a free consultation, visit BusinessCultureConsultants.com